

Assembly Bill 2192

Welfare to Work for Families in Recovery

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Issue

Two out of three parolees are returning to prison. The high recidivism rates and cost of incarceration threaten both the public safety and the economic stability of California.

Those individuals with dependants trying to recover from addiction or find employment are being denied the exact services upon which their recovery depends. The denial of a safety net such as CalWORKS services hurts entire families and perpetuates dependency on the Department of Corrections and child welfare agencies.

EXISTING LAW

Currently, California bans for life all people with a prior drug felony from ever receiving any of the services offered under CalWORKs. This is the only crime in California banned from public assistance.

In 2004, Governor Schwarzenegger signed legislation (AB 1796) to restore food stamps to those who had prior drug possession felonies under the same criteria included in this bill.

THIS BILL

AB 2192 is a cost-effective bill, supported by law enforcement that would restore CalWORKs eligibility to people who have a prior felony conviction of drug possession who are participating in or have successfully completed a government recognized treatment program.

SUMMARY

- This bill would make available CalWORKS services such as drug treatment, child care, employment

services, housing, and temporary assistance.

- Services offered by CalWORKS promote self-sufficiency, family reunification, and successful re-entry into society.
- This bill would remove the ban on welfare to work which undermines California's efforts to reduce recidivism and reunification of families.
- The denial of CalWORKS services disproportionately results in serious barriers for women who are attempting to recover from substance abuse problems and reunify with their children.
- Mechanisms to prevent fraud in the CalWORKS' system are outlined in Section 11272-11274 of the Welfare and Institutions code. Counties are able to place "restrictive payments" upon a recipient if abuse is suspected using venter payments to landlords, utility companies, etc instead of cash.
- This current ban hurts families and those individuals attempting to become self-sufficient which is why this bill has a wide array of support: law enforcement, treatment providers, and welfare advocates.

BACKGROUND

- In Gov. Schwarzenegger's signing message for AB 1796 he wrote, "The challenges of overcoming a drug addiction is substantial and universally denying food stamps to persons with felony drug convictions has created additional obstacles to drug free living and increases the likelihood of re-offending behavior." This sound logic applies equally to CalWORKS benefits.

- The overwhelming majority (80%) of people receiving CalWORKS are women. Of the 1.2 million CalWORKS: 940,947 are kids and 244,242 are adults.
- Almost half of the women in California's prisons are serving time for drug-related offenses, and approximately 80% of women in prison have children.
- The fact is 4 out of 10 women will return to prison and it is likely their children will end up in the foster care system.
- The majority of women in prison are not a threat to public safety, 2/3 of women in prison were convicted of property or drug related charges.
- As of January 2005, 34 states and the District of Columbia – including Illinois, New Mexico, New York, South Carolina, Ohio, Michigan -- have eliminated or modified the lifetime ban on food stamps or welfare benefits.
- Restoring these benefits has enjoyed bipartisan support in the past. Republican Cathie Wright carried similar legislation (SB 659) in 1999/2000. SB 659 received strong bipartisan support; it passed the Senate Floor (30-4) and the House Floor (60-8).

SUPPORT

California Peace Officers' Association
California Police Chiefs Association
Los Angeles County Sheriffs' Association
 AFSME
 A New Way of Life Re-Entry Project
 American Association of University of Women
 American Civil Liberties Union
 Applied Research Center
 Arcata House
 Asian Pacific American Legal Center (APALC)
 Behavioral Health Services, Inc.
 California Association of Addition Recovery Resources
 California Association of Alcohol and Drug Program Executives, Inc.
 California Catholic Conference
 California Food Policy Advocates

California Immigrant Welfare Collaborative (CIWC)
 California National Organization for Women
 California Opioid Maintenance Providers (COMP)
 California Welfare Director's Association
 Children's Defense Fund
 Coalition California Welfare Rights Organizations
 Community Coalition for Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment
 Community Justice Network for Youth
 County Alcohol and Drug Program
 Administrators Association of California
 Drug Policy Alliance
 Every Mother Is a Working Mother Network
 Family to Amend California's Three Strikes (FACTS)
 Homeless Health Care Los Angeles
 JERICHO
 Little Hoover Commission
 Los Angeles Coalition to End Hunger and Homelessness
 Mental Health Association in California
 National Association of Social Workers
 Sacramento Advocates
 Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors
 State of California Commission on the Status Women
 St. Mary's Center
 Tarzana Treatment Center
 The California Partnership
 The W. Haywood Burns Institute
 The Women's Foundation of California
 United Coalition East Prevention Project
 Western Center on Law and Poverty
 Youth Law Center
 Over 250 Individual Letters

OPPOSITION

None on file.

STATUS

04.06.06- Passed out of Human Services (4-2)
 05.25.06- Passed out of Assembly Appropriations

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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